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Nature Nuggets
Introducing Rick Whitteker's newest project
on page 4

To be real
An in-depth look at AI
on page 6

Dancing dreams
Square dancing in the Highlands
on page 11

The Sugar Shack at Haliburton Forest and Wild Life Reserve looks cozy on a snowy day. Maple season is fast approaching, when winter finally starts to melt. /EMILY STONEHOUSE staff

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HANNA: *Swimming*

HELLO FROM Hanna! It's my second year in this school. I'm short, but I have a really loud voice! I'm in a split class again, like last year, so it doesn't bother me. I used to live in downtown Ottawa, and there were two Grade Fours, two Fives and two Sixes. I'm nine, but turning 10 on Halloween. Miss Fields says we can wear *non-violent* costumes and have a party. She tells us October 31 is important in history, and that Canadians honour many international celebrations since we're a *multicultural* society.

DEB REED
Wind in the Attic

She also told me she's delighted to have me in her class, and that she's bought some new children's books about my history and culture.

My official name is *Taqulittuq*. I was born in Iqaluit Nunavut. Both my parents got contract jobs near this town. They work for the main government, but they're in different buildings. We'll be moving again this summer. My dad thinks it'll be back north to Iqaluit.

Everyone calls me *Hanna* except Grandma. She likes my Inuktitut name. She speaks that language, but uses English with me and my brother. He's in Grade 10, and wants to play professional hockey. I cheer him in the town arena. We fly back to Nunavut twice a year to stay with Grandma in our house. After two years in Ottawa and two years here, it'll be nice to live and play back home. I actually can't wait.

But I'll miss Miss Fields. She's way nicer than my old Grade 3/4 teacher. I've been in Grade 5 for only a few weeks, but I already love how she does things. She mixes writing with music, art with science, math with everything. Sometimes it's just plain math, but when she blends lessons, it's just more interesting to me. Plus, she lets us debate, and we even have voluntary spelling bees!

My parents seem to like her too. When they ask about my day, they see I'm learning facts, words, and ideas. I'm making connections. When they ask my brother, he just sort of mumbles and says he's doing *fine*. I think he might have a girlfriend. He's on his phone all the time. I can't even imagine how any girl could like him. He's SO grumpy!

I started this class in a cast. On August 28, I broke my left wrist while swimming. Yes, swimming. It's my favourite thing besides soccer, and I don't get my cast off until early October! It'll be too cold to swim by then anyway, but I still can if I want to since my parents say they'd drive me to a pool in another town. But I can also exercise my wrist in my room.

Actually, I'll wait to swim until I'm visiting Grandma in Iqaluit at Christmastime. There's a year-round indoor aquatic centre up there. I sure won't be slipping on underwater rocks in December!

First I'll enjoy one more school year in Ontario. It's quite nice having trees around.

CountyLife

The following inserts are being distributed with County Life this week:

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Shoppers Drug Mart Haliburton *

Todd's Independent *

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For information on how your flyer can be inserted each week in County Life please contact Melissa Armstrong at **613-332-2002** or **melissa@haliburtonpress.com**

Peekaboo deer by Tammy Nash. See more wildlife on page 7.

Oxtongue Lake pike derby a reel-y good time

THOMAS SMITH
County Life Staff

Sara and Keith Winterbottom have been working hard to organize this year's annual Oxtongue pike Derby held on Feb. 21. Parking for the derby will be available at the Blue Spruce Resort with fishers need to be ready for an 8 a.m. start. /submitted

In the far off land of Dwight, our neighbours to the west of Algonquin Highlands, the Winterbottoms are hard at work preparing for the 49th Annual Oxtongue Pike Derby.

Originally started by the Algonquin Snowmobile Club in the 1970s, the fishing derby was originally a general ice fishing event.

This year marks the second year for Sara and Keith Winterbottom, of Winterbottom Tattoo Company, organizing the annual fishing derby.

"It was pretty much going to be cancelled indefinitely," said Keith. "Last year, Sara broke the records for the most money raised, most people fishing, the most everything."

With Sara taking the lead on the pike derby, she was given the records of past participants and winning fishes.

The Winterbottoms have been fishing in the annual derby for years. In the past, both Sara and her daughter, River, have won prizes in the competition.

As a family affair, River will be at the event on a sled selling raffle tickets.

Last year, with around 180 participants, it was the biggest turnout to the derby on record.

"Back in the day, there used to be so many winter carnivals and winter events," said Sara. "Now, nobody is doing anything. Everything is cancelled."

After the ice fishing derby became a family tradition, Sara could not see the event cease to exist. As an avid fisher and outdoorswoman, she has been fishing her whole life. More so after she married Keith, the duo shared their outdoors interests with their daughter, taking her fishing throughout the entire year and going camping.

"I love getting her outside, being adventurous and getting her off the phone," said Sara. "That was a big thing for us with her growing up. Getting outside and being able to do that, she is lucky growing up in this area. Then, she can pass it on to her family too."

With Keith's interest in sledding and showing off his collection, the pike fishing derby was also host to a Sled Show N' Shine event.

"We try to get as many people to bring sleds as we can," said Keith. Visitors to the event can vote for their favourite sleds. Last year, around a dozen sleds came out for the Show N' Shine. With last year's presence, Keith hopes to increase the sled turnout for the event. There are no restrictions for entries and can include vintage, new, and classic sleds.

The first place prize is a gift pack from MBRP, which includes a $400 gift card for parts.

"The main stage setup is right on the sled trail, so it is easy to get there," she said.

There will be donuts, and barbecue available for purchase and music to entertain visitors. Parking is graciously provided by the Blue Spruce Resort. The stage for the event is donated by the Deck and Dock Company. The derby's weighing station and main activities will be taking place on Feb. 21 at 1215 Oxtongue Lake Road in Algonquin Highlands. The derby starts at 8 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m.

"People are coming to the derby as far as Kingston," said Keith.

Conditions for Oxtongue Lake were rough last year. With slushy ice on the surface, Keith sled across the lake to make clear and accessible trails. With this year's cold, Sara says that conditions are looking highly favourable for the derby.

One of Sara's goals for the derby was setting up a social media presence for the event. With over 300 followers for the Facebook page, the Winterbottoms have seen a growth in attendance with no plans for slowing down their momentum.

Wyatt Black, who appeared in season 10 of the History Channel's Alone television show will be the judge for the event. Recently, Black has published his book Bleeped and Blurred and will be selling copies of it at the event as well as autographs.

As a competition with cash and prizes, registering for the event and a valid fishing license is needed to participate. The registration fee for adults will be $20 and $10 for those aged 12 and under. Participants will be given a wristband that must be on display during the event.

Keith will have a metal detector onsite to test fish for any tamperings. No cheating of any sort will be tolerated. Only pikes that are caught between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. will be weighed for the event. All garbage that is brought to the lake needs to be taken away with you.

"We are trying to reduce the number of pikes that are in the lake," said Keith. "They are wiping out all the lake trout so we are using this as a conservation method."

Oxtongue Lake is situated along the Oxtongue River. As one of the first lakes in the area to freeze, contestants can fish anywhere on the lake end-to-end. Fishers may walk along the lake, use their sled, or other means for transport. You can only have one line in the water at a time, as enforced by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Participants need to bring their own gear. All fishing methods are accepted. If you are using live bait, please remember to bring your receipt if you have purchased it from a different fishing zone.

Participants can put their pike back in the water if they choose. However, the organizers would like to make it clear that no animal is wasted during the derby. With volunteers that can help you clean the pike, make sure to bring freezer bags and boxes for pike meat.

This year, the pike derby has 55 sponsors supporting the event. There will be prizes for adults from first to fourth place with the biggest fish, and from first to third place for youth aged 12 and under. Random giveaways will also take place for derby participants and there will be something there for everybody.

Sara says that the rush she feels when snowmobiling and the ability to see the natural scenery is a highlight for her.

"It is just a fun filled day of excitement," said Sara. Spectators are welcome to come, enjoy food, and have fun in the event.

Last year's first place winner was Kristy Lupton whose pike weighed in at 10.95 pounds.

"It was nice to see a lady win it all," said Sara with a laugh.

Funds raised from the event goes directly back into the Algonquin Snowmobile Club. The club works diligently throughout the winter maintaining and connecting snowmobilers navigating through Dwight, Oxtongue Lake, and Hillside.

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Nature Nuggets

I am very excited to have recently made the leap to publish a book – a compilation of thirty articles I have submitted to *County Life* over the past two years via this bi-weekly column. This decision is not a leap of blind faith as I have received several comments from readers who have expressed enjoyment of my writing. These comments have boosted my confidence, gently nudging me towards taking the next step. The book is called, *Nature Nuggets: Hiking, Paddling & the Ecology of the Haliburton Highlands*.

Nature Nuggets will include twenty articles on day hiking and paddling destinations, as well as ten articles on a range of ecological topics connected to the environs of Haliburton County. I felt it was important to give this book a made-in-Haliburton stamp of approval - all contributions to the book including the writing, editing, publishing and most of the amazing photos were provided by residents of the Haliburton Highlands.

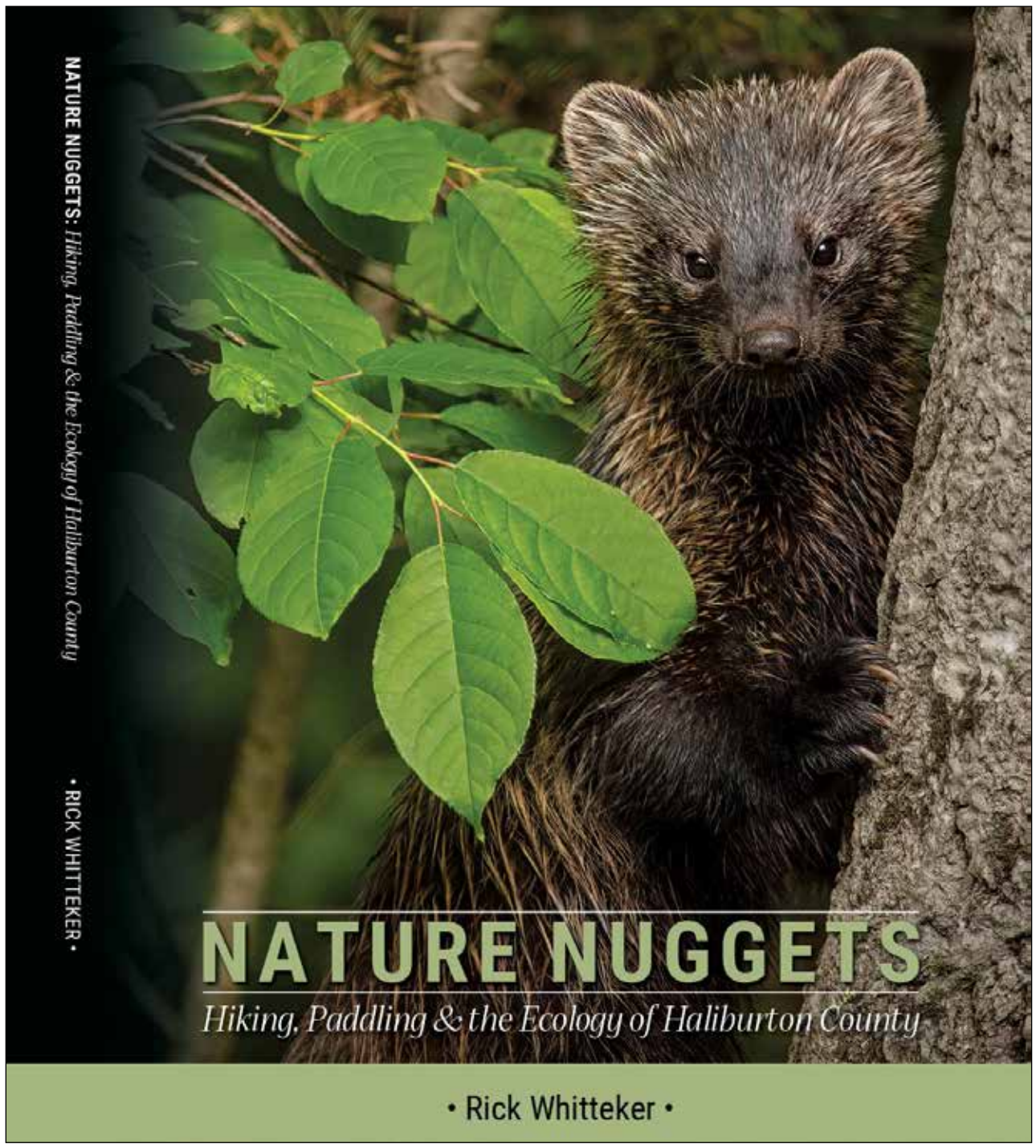
RICK WHITTEKER
Naturally Yours

The process of self publishing is completely new to me. There is so much to learn. To start with, consider the volume of details in the book design process. To create a certain look and feel to the final product, decisions must be made on font size and format, colour scheme, header and footer information, selection of the appropriate photos including resolution quality, location and alignment on the page, acknowledgements of contributors and references. At this point I will just add "etcetera" so I don't bore you with more book design details.

The writing of the articles has already been done but having your written work edited can be very humbling. Self editing and critical review of one's own writing is effective … to a point. Then someone else looks it over and the simplest words like "a" and "to" are overlooked and then added to allow the sentence to make sense, leaving me to wonder – "how did I possibly miss that!" Revisions to avoid dangling modifiers, advice on dashes, commas and brackets, editing out needless words – all this editorial feedback makes me wish I had stayed awake in English class!

And then there is marketing and selling of the book … I'm just starting to sort through those details.

During the process of writing, I try to combine noteworthy nature insights with a sprinkling of storytelling and snippets of humour to keep the tone light but interesting and informative. It will be up to the readers to decide if my good intentions were successful. However, I have wrapped the book in some amazing photographs to help balance out any perceived deficiencies in my writing.


NATURE NUGGETS: Hiking, Paddling & the Ecology of Haliburton County
• RICK WHITTEKER •
NATURE NUGGETS
Hiking, Paddling & the Ecology of Haliburton County
• Rick Whitteker •

I am very grateful for some local photographers. Tammy Nash provided some amazing wildlife shots including the front cover photo of a female fisher. I couldn't resist the juxtaposition of this endearing photograph of a critter that packs a fearsome reputation. Ed Poropat uses his lens often for wildlife identification purposes and his ecological field work, however, the quality of his photos is amazing, especially for birds, moths, dragonflies and butterflies. Thom Lambert is a natural outdoor explorer and uses his creative mind to capture beautiful landscape shots. There are many other photographers whose photos are included and I recognize their contributions in the book. It took a whole community to support the quality of this project.

I have decided to donate a portion of each book sale to two local organizations: Friends of Ecological and Environmental Learning (F.E.E.L.) and the Haliburton Highlands Land Trust. These two non-profit organizations have been a big part of my past and recent history in the Haliburton Highlands. I have been a volunteer with the children's water festival at Kinark Outdoor Centre for twenty years, a wonderful event and the main project of F.E.E.L. My recent employment with the Haliburton Highlands Land Trust has been very gratifying – I am grateful to be associated with this organization and the conservation work they do.

The process of self publishing is expensive. I have recently created an opportunity for people to pre-purchase the book to help me offset the cost of publication. I feel that *Nature Nuggets* would make a great gift for friends, family, seasonal and permanent residents and for those visiting the area. I plan to have the book published by early spring and available soon after in bookstores, outdoor stores, welcome centres, local cafes and other businesses. If you have any questions or would like to pre-purchase the book, I can be reached at rwhitteker9@gmail.com.

From a toe-dipping inquiry into the idea of a book last fall, to the sprint to the finish line this winter, this project has moved quickly and has received great support from many, including the staff at Parker Pad in Haliburton. My hope is that the book serves to entertain and motivate, encouraging people to get out and explore the amazing trails and waterways of the Haliburton Highlands.

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OPP warns public of police impersonation scams

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) is alerting residents across the region to an emerging scam trend involving suspects who pose as police officers to defraud victims of substantial amounts of money.

In recent reports, fraudsters have contacted victims by phone while claiming to be members of the OPP. In each case, the suspect used fabricated names, titles, and badge information to gain credibility. Victims were instructed to withdraw large sums of money and either send the funds through cryptocurrency platforms or hand over cash directly. These tactics resulted in significant financial losses, including incidents where victims paid between $6,000 and $13,000 to individuals falsely claiming to be officers.

Police confirm that the names and ranks provided by the scammers do not correspond with any OPP members. Fraudsters often use urgency, intimidation, and fear to pressure victims into complying with their demands.

Protect Yourself Against Police Impersonation Scams. The OPP is reminding the public of the following fraud prevention strategies:

- Police will never request money, cryptocurrency, gift cards, or financial transfers over the phone.
- Police will never demand immediate payment, threaten arrest, or pressure you to act urgently.
- Do not provide personal information, banking details, PINs, or identification numbers to unsolicited callers.
- Pause and talk to a trusted family member or friend before making any financial decision under pressure.

Verify or Report Through the OPP Non Emergency Line

If you receive a call from someone claiming to be an OPP officer and you are unsure of its legitimacy, you can contact the OPP non emergency line at 1-888-310-1122.

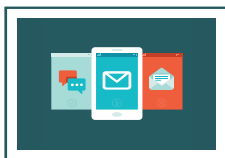
This number can be used to:

- Confirm whether an officer has attempted to contact you
- Report suspicious calls or attempted frauds
- Speak directly with police about fraud related concerns

Residents who have been targeted or victimized by fraud are encouraged to contact police and report the incident to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at -888-495-8501 or online at www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca.

The OPP continues to monitor fraud trends and reminds community members that awareness is one of the strongest tools against financial victimization.

Submitted



Have a thought, comment or opinion you'd like to share?

Send a letter to the editor to
emily@haliburtonpress.com

Knit picking

I WAS discussing fashion trends with a friend the other day, as we outdoorsmen often do, when I mentioned that I had not seen a sweater with a duck, pheasant, pointing dog, fish, or beagle knitted on it, since I was a kid.

He lamented that this was his experience too.

Those of you under 50 probably do not remember them, but there was a time when almost every hunter and angler had a sweater that had them. And, lest you think they were tacky, let me just point out that they were cardigans – with zippers. And when a man of a certain age wore one, they turned heads, though, admittedly, not always in their direction.

STEVE GALEA
Beyond 35

I wasn't old enough to test my theory back then, but I'm pretty sure a sweater like that made the women of the day swoon. How else would you explain the fact that my mom never let my dad leave the house with his on. (It had a pointing dog and a flushing pheasant on it. Can you blame her?)

This explains why the Beatles or Elvis never wore these on stage too. Unless I am totally mistaken, I'm guessing their security details wouldn't have been able to hold the female fans back.

My buddy, whose father had a sweater with a mallard duck on the back, concurred. He said his mother always said, "Dear mother of God. You're not leaving the house with that thing on."

They were that sexy.

Of course, a lot of things have changed since those sweaters were first unleashed on an unprepared world. These days, I'm relatively confident that if I was so lucky as to have a cardigan with a well-knit beagle on the back, I think Jenn would not need to worry too much, if I wore it in public places – but only because we've all learned what is inappropriate these days.

Sure, there'd be cat calls, countless whistles, and the odd marriage proposal, but, otherwise, there wouldn't be much to worry about – unless you had the sweater with the pheasant and pointing dog on it. Then anything could happen.

Which begs the question, when are these sweaters going to come back into fashion?

You might find this hard to believe, based on my vintage "I'm with Stupid" tee shirts, but I am not exactly an expert on fashion trends.

Yet, even I know that eventually everything comes back into style.

Having said that, some things do so quicker than others. Which explains why I have been patiently waiting almost 50 years for these things to take the Parisian runways by storm once again.

My guess is that the fashion world is worried that if they return, they will never leave us again. And who wants these sweaters to be the standard against which all other fashion is measured?

I will say with certainty that, should these sweaters be placed on the shelves of my favourite fashion/bait shops, I will be the first to purchase one – maybe more. I also would not be surprised if these sweaters were prohibitively expensive. After all, it cannot be easy knitting a deer whose eyes follow you.

In any case, I can hardly wait to see this trend reappear sometime soon. It's going to happen eventually – and it'll make socks and sandals look like it was just an unfortunate passing trend.

Trust me. I'm wouldn't pull the wool over your eyes.

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Be real

EMILY STONEHOUSE
County Life Editor

WE'VE LIKELY all seen them. The cute little caricatures online of our friends and family, designed to capture the essence of their personalities.

It's part of the newest Artificial Intelligence (AI) trend. These come and go quickly, with new ones sprouting up every few months, spreading like wildfire as social media consumers gobble them up.

For those who may not know, AI can be accessed by anyone. You don't have to be a computer wizard to tap into the function. You simply search ChatGPT, and an online conversation will kickstart on. You can then type in any prompt for the search engine to use.

And I mean, literally anything. You can upload a photo of yourself and ask AI to add glasses to your face, just to see how it looks. You can add photos of your kids and ask AI to age them, adding a glimpse into your future.

The newest trend with cartoon drawings is made using the prompt "create a caricature using everything you know about me."

That's it. Not a single other clue about who you are. Just asking an online robot what THEY know about you.

And the results are eerie. I've seen some with folks standing close to their children, their faces identical to their real children. AI seems to understand all the interests, hobbies, and careers, without any additional information shared. It collects this from your phone, your search engines, even the conversations you have.

And I can hear myself spiralling. I sound like a conspiracy theorist. Don't worry, I do believe the world is round and that dinosaurs once roamed many miles. Climate change is real and at some point, we landed on the moon.

But this AI stuff is unknown territory. We're giving too much away, and we seem relatively fine with handing it over in the process?

It's proven that using AI guzzles clean water. Data servers use an abundance of filtered water to cool down the machines. In 2023, a study found that by casually inputting 10 to 15 prompts in ChatGPT, you would be wasting 500 milliliters of water, depending on the server model.

It's also a known fact that when you upload your own photos to the site, that is no longer your property. It officially belongs to the world of AI, and the servers use these images to re-populate AI tasks around the world. That means you can see your face or the faces of your children on any program utilizing the service, without your consent or knowledge.

Now I know I am trying to hold my ground in a world that is being overrun with AI. It is the way of the future. I recognize that. As humans, we dream of a life where technological advances can be utilized to enhance our opportunities.

But let's leave it at that. We can use AI for things like science (used in the hands of proper scientists), medicine (used in the hands of medical professionals), and education (used in the hands of real educators). But there has to be that human element, interwoven into it.

Don't give it all away. Don't sell your soul for the quick rush of seeing yourself as a cute caricature, just to post on Facebook.

Because while AI may be eerily accurate with the "everything you know about me" prompt, including your job, your hobbies, and likely now your passwords, it can only ever skim the surface of a human experience.

That can only be found through the brushstroke of a real artist, the overlapping notes of a real musician, the words embedded in the paper of a real story, the sparkles on the water of a real sunset.

We're not ready to say goodbye to that yet, so don't fall into the trap and ease of AI.

Focus on the good, the genuine, and above all, the real.

Because it's getting harder and harder to tell the difference.

Top 10 names for snow ploughs

STEVE GALEA
Humour Columnist

LATELY, I'VE noticed several contests encouraging people to name the snow ploughs in their municipalities. I think that's a great idea. Anything that does so much good, should not go unnamed. With that in mind, here are my top 10.

Feel free to add to the list.

1. Finder of Lost Mailboxes
2. Sand in my Track
3. The Scraped Crusader
4. Roads Scholar
5. White Line Cleaver
6. Bury White
7. Making Bank
8. The First Snowel
9. Combover
10. Not my problem you just shoveled your driveway.

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Let people know about your event. Send it in to our FREE community events listing in the Haliburton Echo, Minden Times and County Life. Email the basics to: classifieds@haliburtonpress.com.

Aftermath

Tops of pine saplings poking through Snow,
a stillness veiling Air, in the aftermath of the storm, billions of snowflakes swirling through the blackness,
illuminating Night, while the hills and forests slept, awakening to snowflakes still spilling
down from a stone Sky,
smudging Sun and its lunar glow, trees draped in capes of Snow, their trunks creaking from the cold,
Lakes frozen in their crypt of ice, sealed from the world of Air and light, snowflakes, falling and falling, sideways and straight down,
floating and drifting 'till they reach the ground, cloaking boulders and branches and benches along the path,
a silence shrouding Air in the storm's aftermath, a solitary seagull flapping its wings over the frozen Lake,
not a single squawk as it lands on top of a lamp post beside a buried bench,
swiveling its head to observe the landscape smothered in Snow, then staring straight ahead,
frozen as the Lake in its repose,
my toes wriggling in the darkness of socks and boots, trying to stay warm, as I stand on
the freshly plowed path,
inhaling Air scoured by the storm, blinking up at the gull that's facing then Lake, wondering where the
rest of its flock is,
maybe flapping through Air over another frozen Lake, or resting in a nest of Snow or in a secret place,
wherever they go,
nestling together, their feathers keeping each other warm, I slap my mittened hands together,
rubbing them, palm to palm,
clumps of Snow sticking to the wool, that I shake onto the ground, leaving dimples in the Snow,
wondering how many billions of snowflakes fell overnight and during the day, how long their journey took to
reach the ground,
as they whirled and swirled and drifted through Air in silence, not a single one of them colliding
with another,
as they floated down, not knowing where they would land, on a bench or rock or rivulet of River still flowing
between sheets of ice,
or in a bare hand reaching up to catch them as they fall, melting into the skin of its palm,
the seagull squawks and I turn my head to watch it flap through Air, back over the frozen Lake,
the white of its wings bleeding into Sky, my eyes trailing its flight 'till it shrinks to the size of a snowflake,
its squawks swallowed by Sky, the smudge of Sun glowing up there, like the Moon,
in the middle of the afternoon,
in the aftermath of the storm, pine saplings and benches buried in Snow,
I swipe some Snow off a piece of bench with my mittened hand before I turn to go,
making space for a gull or another bird to land, or maybe the stray snowflakes beginning to float through Air,
Sky sloughing off remnants of the storm.

Sylvie Kalenda

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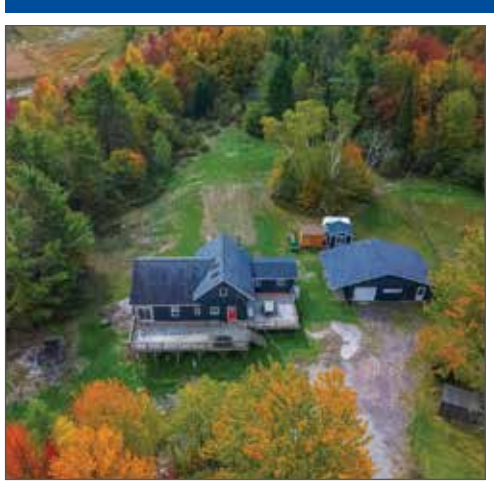

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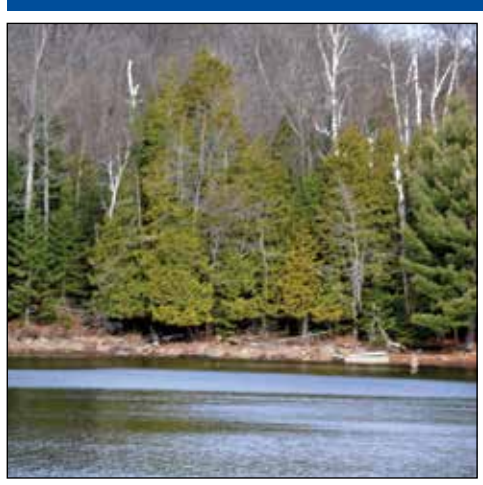

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How they say that in...

English: Windy
Spanish: Ventoso
Italian: Ventoso
French: Venteux
German: Windig

Did You KNOW?

Guinness World Records says Australian Robert Moore's kite reached the highest altitude by a single kite in 2014. Moore's kite reached 16,009 feet, or 4,879.84 meters.

Get the PICTURE?

Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: Kite

Get Scrambled

Unscramble the words to determine the phrase.

BBYA LBKNATE

Answer: Baby blanket

Math Blocks

Fill in the missing blocks with numbers between 0-20.
The numbers in each row add up to the totals on the right.
The numbers in each column add up to the totals on the bottom.

6		19	27
	8	11	22
15	1		16
24	11	30	

Solution

6	2	19
3	8	11
15	1	0

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Shine up your dancing shoes

Dance Happens Here Haliburton hosted a community square dancing night on Saturday, Feb. 7 at the Haliburton Legion, with Hannah Shira Naiman guiding the guests through a night of dancing and music. The busy event saw dancers of all ages and abilities enjoying the community experience. /ADAM FRISK staff

Legion Events

Branch 441 Kinmount

Monday: Bid Euchre 1 p.m.
Tuesday: Closed
Wednesday: Mixed Darts, 7:30 p.m.
Thursday: Closed
Friday: Bingo- Doors open at 5 p.m., play at 6:45 p.m. Supper specials every Friday starting at 5 p.m. May purchase special and eat in club room downstairs. Clubroom opens at 4 p.m.
Saturday: Clubroom opens at 3 p.m. Meat draw 5:30 p.m.
Special events:
3rd Thursday of the month 7 p.m. executive meeting and 7:30 p.m. general meeting (members only)
3rd Sunday of the month Ladies Auxiliary Meeting (members only)
Hall rentals available at reasonable prices. Call 705-488-3462 or 705-928-7105. We welcome everyone to our events and we look forward to seeing you!

Branch 129 Haliburton

Mondays: Bridge 1 p.m. Schofield Rm. Youth darts 6:30 to 8 p.m. Clubroom 10 to 18 years of age. All are welcome, no experience necessary
Tuesdays: League darts 7 p.m.
Wednesdays: Bid Euchre 1 p.m. start – Main Hall. Bingo doors open at 6 p.m. Bingo 7 p.m. FirstWed of each month with jackpot. Follow Facebook.com/Branch129 Bingo for the most up-to-date information
Thursdays: General Meeting third Thursday of the month, 6:30 p.m. All members urged to attend.
Ladies Auxiliary last Thursday of the month at 1 p.m.
Fridays: Five meat draw, five prizes each draw, first draw 4:30 p.m., last draw 6:30 p.m. Tickets $2 per draw. Paul Sisson, MC. Friday fun darts from 4:30 p.m. and onwards. 50/50 Draw 5:40 p.m.
Whether you're planning a function for 10 or 200, call Cheryl Waller at 905-447-7741, email haliburtonlegionrentals@gmail.com or visit haliburtonlegion.com. Everyone is welcome! Club room hours: Mon. 3 to 6 p.m., Tues. 3 to 9 p.m., Wed/Thurs. 3 to 6 p.m. Fri. 3 to 7 p.m.

Branch 636 Minden

Lunch - Monday to Friday
Monday: Rug Hookers every second week. Bid Euchre 1 to 3 p.m.
Tuesday: Food 5 p.m. Canoe FM Bingo 6 p.m.
Thursday: Cribbage 1 to 3 p.m., Darts 7 to 9 p.m. and Euchre 7 to 9 p.m.
Every other Friday: Karaoke 8 to 11 p.m.
Friday Fish & Chips, Wings. Lunch 11a.m. to 2 p.m. and Dinner 4 to 7 p.m.
Saturday All Day Breakfast 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with three Meat draws at 11 a.m.
Call ahead any day for take-out: 705-286-4541.
Schedules are subject to change without notice.
Check our Facebook page Minden Legion Branch 636 for more info.

Branch 624 Wilberforce

Hours - Sunday: Special Events Only, Monday: 7 to 10 p.m., Tuesday: Special Events Only, Wednesday: 2 to 10 p.m., Thursday: 2 to 6 p.m., Friday: 2 to 11 p.m., Saturday: 2 to 7 p.m.
Mondays: Feb. 23 Darts $5/player 7 p.m.
Tuesdays: Feb. 24 Veteran's and Seniors Exercise Club 1:30 p.m.
Wednesdays: Feb. 25 - Darts $5/player 2 p.m.
Quick Supper Menu changes weekly $10. 5 to 6:30 p.m.
Open Cribbage 6:30 p.m. – No need to pre-register
Thursdays: Feb. 26 HHHS Social Rec 10 a.m.
Fridays: Feb. 20 Fish and Chips 1pc/$15, 2pc/$20. 5 to 8 p.m.
27 Wings and Jam Session $15/lb. 5 to 8 p.m.
27 Community Care 55+ Lunch $20. noon
Saturdays: Feb. 21, 28 Meat Draw 3 p.m.
Feb. 28 Nacho Average Trivia 7pm. $5/Player
Call the Legion for more info 705-448-222

Broomball heroes

On Jan. 31 Els and Matt Brown hosted the 5th annual Broomball Tournament on Pringle Road. Five teams were pitted against each other in a double elimination bracket. The Rockies captained by Blayne and the Thrashers captained by Gen and Lily faced off in the championship. The game was an intense battle. Back and forth with shots and saves. It went to overtime where Graham of the Thrashers scored top corner to take his team to victory. It was a fun filled event with over 35 people in attendance. The organizers wish to thank all those who participated, and congratulate Gen, Lily, Graham, Gavin, Ross, Tommy and Aubrie on their win. /submitted

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VS

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COMING EVENTS

WIG-A-Mog INN STAFF REUNION BonnieView Inn / 10 - 12 April 2026 A weekend of friendship and reminiscing Contact: **BruceMedcalf@yahoo.ca** for details

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would like to extend a sincere THANK YOU to all that attended, supported and donated to their 2026 Fur Harvesters Workshop Special Thanks to all the wonderful volunteers!

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Barb Schofield – Wilberforce
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Canadian Heroes Foundation - Cobourg
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Coneybeare's Butcher Shop – Minden
Cutter's Edge Woodworking - Wilberforce
Dollo's Foodland – Minden
Fur Harvesters Auction – North bay
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Gord Johnson - Cobourg
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Muskoka Auto Parts – Minden
O.F.A.H. - Peterborough
Ontario Fur Managers Federation
Pharmasave – Minden
Ridgewood Ford – Minden
Rory Cummings – Curve Lake
SAPS – Fur Managing Supplies – Orillia
Sunbelt Rentals
(Jay Flowers & Kevin Ryalen) – Haliburton
Supertrax - Minden

Thanks also to: Wilberforce Legion Ladies Auxiliary, M.N.R.F., Citizens for Crown Land Protection, 93.5 Moose FM, 100.9 Canoe FM, Haliburton County Life, The Highlander, Bancroft This Week

Community Events

Send your event listing to classifieds@haliburtonpress.com

SALC Needle Felting Chocolate-Covered Strawberries
When: Thursday, Feb. 19 from 2 to 3 p.m.
Where: Dysart Library (Haliburton Village)
Learn how to needle-felt a strawberry. All materials provided. Offered in partnership with the Government of Ontario, supporting social connection, creativity, and well-being among older adults in our community. Registration required. Call 705-457-2241 or email programs@haliburtonlibrary.ca to register.

Tech Help Walk-in-Clinic
When: Friday, Feb. 20 from 10 a.m. to noon
Where: Wilberforce Library
Stuck on a tech problem? First come, first served. Each person gets a 30-minute session with library staff to tackle one specific technology challenge. One session per person per day.

SALC Needle Felting Chocolate-Covered Strawberries
When: Friday, Feb. 20 from 1 to 2 p.m.
Where: Dorset Library
Learn how to needle-felt a strawberry. All materials provided. Offered in partnership with the Government of Ontario, supporting social connection, creativity, and well-being among older adults in our community. Registration required. Call 705-457-2241 or email programs@haliburtonlibrary.ca to register.

Free Community Screening - Sounds & Pressure: Reggae in a Foreign Land
When: Saturday, Feb. 21 at 1 p.m.
Where: Minden Hills Library
Celebrate Black history and music. Explore the incredible journey of Jamaican music icons who brought their sound to Toronto, transforming an unlikely hub into a vibrant centre of Caribbean creativity. All ages welcome. No registration required. Movie is rated PG.

Tech Help Walk-in-Clinic
When: Tuesday, February 24 from 1 to 4 p.m.
Where: Minden Hills Library
Stuck on a tech problem? First come, first served. Each person gets a 30-minute session with library staff to tackle one specific technology challenge. One session per person per day.

Genealogy for Seniors
When: Wednesday, February 25 from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. at the Dysart (Haliburton Village) Library, or 2 p.m. at the Minden Hills Library
Curious about where you come from? Join us for an inspiring introduction to family history research led by Adele Espina of the Haliburton Highlands Genealogy Group, with support provided by the Government of Ontario. This workshop will walk you through the steps of building your family tree – from locating historical records to organizing your research and uncovering stories from your past.

Savouring Stories
When: Thursday, Feb. 26 from 11 a.m. to noon
Where: Highland Grove Library
Each month, we explore the fascinating world of food through stories, history, shared experiences, and cooking (every second month). No registration required.

P.A. Day Family Movie - Coco
When: Friday, Feb. 27 from 1 to 3 p.m.
Where: Minden Hills and Dysart (Haliburton Village) Library
This heartwarming adventure follows Miguel, a young boy who dreams of becoming a musician, and finds himself on a journey through the Land of the Dead. All ages welcome. No registration required. Movie is rated PG.

Recurring events

TOPS: Take Off Pounds Sensibly
When: Monday mornings 9:30 to 11 a.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion Branch 129, upper level
Admission: Yearly membership of $59
A non-profit/commercial network of weight-loss support groups, offers programs for healthy living and weight management.

Bridge for Seniors
When: Mondays at 1 p.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion - Schofield Rm
All welcome

Haliburton Legion Walking Group
When: Mondays at 9 to 10 a.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion - Remembrance Hall
A safe walking environment. Lead by an Occupational therapist.

Free Balanced Fitness and Active Social Senior Classes
When: Every second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 10 to 11 a.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion - Remembrance Hall
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Hodgson meets with school councils

by Andrew Milne

MPP Chris Hodgson told members of Haliburton County school councils last week that they are very much part of the province's plans.

What those plans are, however, he couldn't really say yet.

Members of councils from across the county met with Hodgson last week at Archie Stouffer Elementary School.

The meeting, requested by the councils, was called to give them an opportunity to ask questions on the implementation of the changes to education proposed by the province in mid-January.

Approximately 25 people were present for the meeting, and came prepared with a list of questions, aimed at resolving key aspects of the amalgamation of school boards and the shifting of education finance to the provincial purview.

Hodgson, however, had few answers for them. In symphony with his cabinet colleagues' statements of the past few weeks, he responded to most inquiries that he did not know, that much of the information they were requesting hadn't been determined. but that he would to take those questions to the consulting committees, and to Minister of Education John Snobelen.

Hodgson took the opportunity to defend the government against charges that it is moving too fast, and failing to consult, and made a statements emphasizing the government's belief in the need for drastic change.

"I don't have all the answers at this time, but I'll be happy to tell you what I do know. I can tell you that the roles of school councils will be the same or enhanced under Bill 104... Tell me what you think your role should be."

Council members had varying reactions. Some seemed to be feeling some of the frustration the province's transfer partners have been expressing in the atmosphere of confusion that has followed the province's mid-January blitz of restructuring legislation. They didn't seem too happy to be told, again, that most of the answers aren't there yet, and that the government couldn't say for sure in some cases when they might be. Hodgson did say much of the clear legal powers of councils should be spelled out in legislation within a few months.

Hodgson also defended the government's decision to announce as much as it has without having more of the specific details of implementation in place. Said Hodgson, "It's a Catch-22. If we'd come out with everything decided, people would have said we weren't being democratic... We've consulted, and we will be consulting through the year. We want to hear from you."

Though some councillors were sympathetic, many also expressed reservations about the speed of the government's action — and some concern for the impending amalgamation of the board. Said one woman, "We had a good board. You're taking that away."

Said Jane Johnston, a Haliburton parent who has been involved in education issues since the controversy over the proposed closure of Victoria Street school, "I've had the opportunity to speak to the board a number of times over the past year, and they've listened. I'm not sure I believe I'm still going to have that opportunity in the future."

Archie Stouffer Elementary School principal Peter Forgrave, right, was the host as Victoria-Haliburton MPP Chris Hodgson answered questions posed by members of the newly appointed school councils from throughout the county.

Square pegs, round holes

School councils occupy an odd position in the restructur-

(more on page 4)

Official comment yet to come

Minden councillors cool on Barber report

Anson, Hindon and Minden councillor Daryl Moore is not convinced that the findings of the Barber Report, which claim Haliburton County municipalities can save $1.25-million, is accurate.

Discounting the $600,000 the report says can be saved by transferring winter maintenance of county roads to the municipalities, Moore says the savings amount to an average of about $10,000 per municipality.

"He has shown us very little savings," Moore said.

Councillor Sinc Nesbitt agreed. He said that the benchmark that has been set for the winter road maintenance, is based on the unit costs in townships have the fewest miles of roads to plow.

Moore added that the figures from 1995 were used for the analysis and that the 1996 figures will show savings over the previous year.

"The report is redundant, in my opinion," Moore said.

Moore was also concerned that the report was biased in favour of keeping the 10 municipal and county governments intact. He's not convinced that there would be no savings in going to a one-tier system. That option was not considered when the report was being compiled.

The Minden council will be reviewing the report in detail and a statement regarding Anson, Hindon and Minden's evaluation of the report is expected.

Responding to reeve Jeanne Anthon's statement that what was reported in the papers was accurate, Moore said that it is up to council to issue a statement outlining the municipality's opinion regarding the report.

Moore said it is unfortunate that the report received the publicity it has before the municipalities have had the opportunity to analyze the information.

Bank tenders virtually identical

Anson, Hindon and Minden council asked the two banks in the village to submit tenders for the banking services the municipality requires. The municipality was hoping to get the best value for its banking dollars.

Both the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, which has been providing the municipality's banking for many years, and the Toronto Dominion Bank, responded with proposals. After reviewing both tenders, council found the cost of services offered were virtually identical.

Council saw no advantage in switching from the CIBC to the TD, so CIBC will continue to be the municipality's banking service provider.

AH&M supports HCSA bridge proposal

Anson, Hindon and Minden council has offered moral support, if not finan-

(more on page 5)

Police issue warning on tainted drugs

The OPP is investigating incidents which may have involved narcotics laced with a dangerous poison.

Details are sketchy all around though the substance is known to have resulted in two people being taken to hospital in Minden. The high school was asked to announce a warning over the public address system, but a spokesman could not say what narcotics were involved.

The OPP says two youths from the Haliburton-Minden area were hospitalized following the use of what the force release called 'an unknown narcotic'. The force says they believe the drug originated in the Haliburton-Minden area.

Police say they are still investigating the incidents, and are waiting for lab results on the substance.

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